

# The Sociological Role of Kiai in Strengthening Religious Moderation: A Case Study of Moderate Islam in Pamulang, South Tangerang

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the promotion of religious moderation in Pamulang, South Tangerang, through the revitalization of moderate Islam by Kiai. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research explores the pivotal role of Kiai in fostering religious harmony within the Muslim community and across religious groups in Pamulang's diverse society. The findings reveal that Pamulang, while multi-ethnic and culturally diverse, is predominantly Muslim, with religious moderation efforts led by ten charismatic Kiai—two locals and eight immigrants—whose domestic and international educational backgrounds bolster their legitimacy as religious leaders. These Kiai have implemented strategies such as interfaith dialogue, conflict resolution forums, and educational campaigns, leading to significant community changes. The study underscores the critical role of moderate Islamic teachings in promoting peace and religious harmony in pluralistic societies.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a unitary country grounded in the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), Indonesia encompasses many religions, cultures, languages, ethnicities, and social statuses. This diversity has the potential to serve as a unifying force for the nation, yet it also harbors the risk of social friction if not managed with wisdom and inclusivity. Historically, Islam entered the Indonesian archipelago peacefully, bringing with it the principles of *Wasathiyah Islam* (moderate Islam) that emphasize balance, tolerance, and respect for pluralism (Inayatillah et al., 2022; Shofura et al., 2024; Syafieh & Anzhaikan, 2023). The inclusive nature of moderate Islam, which respects and accommodates diverse beliefs, facilitated its harmonious coexistence with pre-existing cultural and religious traditions, creating a distinctive sociological foundation for Indonesia's plural society.

However, globalization and shifting international political dynamics have introduced challenges in the form of transnational ideologies that often propagate extremism, radicalism, and terrorism (Adnan & Amaliyah, 2021; Azra, 2004). The rise of radical movements in Indonesia is a pressing concern, with these ideologies infiltrating society through formal, non-formal, and informal educational institutions and social media platforms (Gazali et al., 2023; Shalihin et al., 2024). Despite these challenges, Indonesia's social fabric has shown resilience, with the potential to withstand these threats and maintain inter-religious harmony (Sari & Wasi, 2022; Sinaga et al., 2019; Takdir et al., 2021).

In addressing these challenges, religious leaders, particularly *kiai* (Islamic scholars), play a pivotal role in revitalizing moderate Islamic teachings to counter radical ideologies and foster social harmony. *Kiai* serves as bridge-builders who guide communities toward a more inclusive and balanced understanding of Islam. Their influence extends beyond the confines of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) to *da'wah* forums, mosques, religious assemblies, and collaborations with governmental and private institutions (Badaruddin et al., 2021; Faizah, 2023; Hasyim, 2021). In Pamulang, South Tangerang, *kiai* are at the forefront of promoting religious moderation in a pluralistic and dynamic community. Pamulang, home to over 317,796 residents from diverse backgrounds, is predominantly Muslim, with a significant presence of minorities adhering to Christian, Catholic, Hindu, and Buddhist faiths. The area's socio-economic landscape reflects a broad spectrum of professions, from civil servants and private employees to traders and laborers, underscoring the hopeful future of fostering interfaith harmony.

By addressing historical and contemporary challenges, *kiai* have positioned themselves as mediators capable of bridging divides, resolving conflicts, and strengthening social cohesion. Their efforts underscore the critical role of moderate Islam as a bulwark against radicalism and a means to sustain Indonesia's unity amidst its rich diversity. In education, Pamulang has institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion, including Islamic boarding schools. These Islamic boarding schools teach various religious disciplines, such as *fiqh* based on the book of Imam Syafi'i, Sufism from the book of Imam Ghazali, and monotheism from the book of Imam Asy'ari (Amboro, 2023; Hajam et al., 2020; Supriyanto et al., 2022; Toriq, 2022). The role of *kiai* here is not only limited to teaching books but also to conveying *da'wah* that supports religious moderation and strengthening the values of tolerance in a pluralistic society (Araniri et al., 2023; Nasith, 2024; Sumpena & Jamaludin, 2020).

Previous research has discussed the role of kiai in spreading moderate Islamic teachings. For example, Rozaq et al. (2022), Nasution (2023), and Muid et al. (2024) research shows that kiai in Islamic boarding schools have an essential role in fighting the flow of radicalism through an inclusive and moderate educational approach. (Ruslan et al., 2022) (Faisal et al., 2022) also found that kiai in urban areas influence people's understanding of religious moderation. On the other hand, Hamka et al. (2024) and Ghulam et al. (2024) research emphasize that the challenges of globalization and the development of information technology accelerate the spread of radical ideology, which requires the role of kiai to be more adaptive in conveying moderate da'wah through digital media.

Despite the increasing discourse on religious moderation, limited research has specifically examined the role of kiai in revitalizing wasathiyah (moderate) Islamic teachings in urban areas with high diversity, such as Pamulang and South Tangerang. Previous studies have predominantly focused on the role of kiai in rural settings, where communities are relatively homogenous and less influenced by globalization and social media pressures. In contrast, urban areas like Pamulang, characterized by cultural and religious plurality, present unique challenges and opportunities for promoting Islamic moderation. This indicates a significant research gap in understanding how Kiai navigates and addresses the complexities of urban diversity (Ghulam et al., 2024; Muid et al., 2024; Nasution, 2023; Rozaq et al., 2022).

The first research gap lies in the geographic focus of existing studies. Most research highlights the contributions of kiai in rural areas, where the propagation of wasathiyah Islam is often directed toward cohesive and traditional communities. Urban environments like Pamulang, however, demand a different approach due to their pluralistic nature and exposure to global cultural currents. Urban societies face higher social pressures resulting from rapid globalization, technological advancements, and the influence of social media, which can amplify both inclusive and extreme ideologies. These dynamics create an urgent need to investigate how Kiai adapts its strategies in such urban contexts (Faisal et al., 2022; Hamka et al., 2024; Ruslan et al., 2022).

Second, while there has been considerable discussion about wasathiyah Islam, there still needs to be a more in-depth exploration of its application in urban areas experiencing heightened social polarization and tension. Globalization and the digital age have introduced opportunities and challenges, with social media often becoming a double-edged sword. On one hand, it provides a platform for promoting moderate values; on the other, it enables the rapid spread of radical narratives. Urban kiai are crucial in mitigating these challenges by emphasizing the principles of inclusivity and mutual respect inherent in wasathiyah teachings. However, this specific aspect of their role still needs to be explored in academic literature.

Given these research gaps, this study aims to address the following key questions: How do kiai in Pamulang, as religious leaders, promote wasathiyah Islamic teachings in a highly diverse urban environment? What strategies do they employ to counter the challenges posed by globalization, social media, and urban pluralism? These questions are significant in light of the evolving nature of da'wah in urban contexts. The findings of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of kiai in fostering social harmony and strengthening religious moderation in urban areas with complex societal dynamics.

This research contributes to the academic discourse by offering new insights into the interplay between kiai leadership, urban diversity, and Islamic moderation. Furthermore, the results have practical implications for developing effective and context-sensitive da'wah strategies that address the unique challenges of globalization. By focusing on Pamulang as a case study, this research provides a model for understanding and revitalizing moderate Islam in diverse urban settings, which can be applied to similar contexts in Indonesia and beyond.

## **2. METHODS**

This study, conducted in Pamulang, South Tangerang, used qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach was chosen as it is well-suited for exploring the subjective experiences of kiai in their crucial role of revitalizing moderate Islam within a pluralistic society. The research is grounded in the attitude-behavior relationship theory, which explains that changes in social behavior result from changes in individual attitudes influenced by social and cultural interactions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The data collection process was meticulous, employing various techniques to ensure depth and richness. Literature and document reviews were conducted to gather relevant secondary data on moderate Islam and the sociocultural dynamics of the Pamulang community. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants purposively selected based on their direct involvement in promoting moderate Islam, including the Head of Government and Social Welfare for Pamulang District, administrators of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), ten kiai from Islamic boarding schools, and members of the Pamulang Muslim community. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for the exploration of emergent themes without deviating from the main topics (Kvale, 2007).

Direct observations were conducted in strategic locations such as boarding schools, mosques, and taklim assemblies to observe religious practices and social interactions in real-life contexts. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were also held, involving community representatives, academics, and religious leaders, to strengthen findings from interviews and observations (Morgan, 1996). This collaborative approach, which includes diverse perspectives, ensures that the findings are comprehensive and representative of the community. Data analysis followed an inductive approach comprising several steps: data categorization based on emerging themes, typology development to identify patterns, thematic analysis to explore similarities and differences across data sources, and data validation through triangulation and peer review. Validation involves thorough observation to ensure data consistency, triangulation by verifying data across sources, methods, and theories, and discussions with peers to gain broader perspectives and minimize researcher subjectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). The key informants were selected based on their leadership roles, educational backgrounds, and direct engagement in promoting moderate Islamic values. These systematic steps comprehensively understand the kiai's role in fostering religious moderation in Pamulang's diverse community.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1. Theories of Religious Moderation**

Religious moderation is a theoretical framework that balances religious practices with principles of tolerance, coexistence, and mutual respect in a pluralistic society. It emphasizes the avoidance of extremes, promoting a middle-path approach (*al-wasatiyyah*) as described in Islamic teachings. This concept is rooted in the Quranic principle of being a "justly balanced nation" (*ummatan wasatan*) (Quran 2:143), signifying a community that practices moderation in belief, worship, and social interactions. The principle of moderation is a spiritual ideal and a practical guideline to foster peaceful coexistence and mutual respect in diverse societies (Kamali, 2015).

In Islamic thought, moderation reflects an ethical framework encompassing justice, balance, and inclusivity. According to Abu-Nimer (2003), it aligns with universal human values such as fairness, empathy, and open dialogue. Moderation does not signify passivity or compromise in faith but represents an active commitment to rejecting extremism while embracing diversity. Al-Faruqi (1982) further explains that moderation integrates Islam's spiritual and intellectual dimensions, enabling Muslims to contribute positively to modern societal challenges without abandoning core religious principles.

For kiai in Pamulang, South Tangerang, religious moderation is central to their role as spiritual leaders. Their efforts to promote inclusive interpretations of Islamic teachings exemplify the application of moderation to address modern societal issues. This aligns with Rahman (1984) concept of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), where religious leaders reinterpret Islamic principles to adapt to evolving social contexts. By emphasizing moderation, kiai bridge traditional Islamic values with contemporary realities, encouraging their followers to uphold tolerance and pluralism. Moreover, their leadership fosters interfaith dialogue, strengthens social cohesion, and mitigates the influence of radical ideologies.

Theories of religious moderation also emphasize education as an essential medium for cultivating tolerance and critical thinking. Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), under the guidance of Kiai, play a significant role in embedding moderation values. Hafidz (2021) asserts that pesantren preserve and contextualize classical Islamic teachings to address modern societal needs. For instance, integrating subjects such as human rights, environmental ethics, and social justice into the curriculum ensures that students develop a comprehensive understanding of Islam aligned with moderation principles.

Additionally, the theory highlights the transformative potential of religious moderation in countering extremism and fostering community resilience. Kiai in Pamulang achieves this by promoting community engagement through sermons, workshops, and interfaith dialogues, reflecting moderation's practical application. Their approach aligns with Kamali (2015) assertion that moderation involves integrating spirituality, law, and culture to create an inclusive society.

Religious moderation also requires a multidimensional approach involving collaboration between religious leaders, educators, and policymakers. Kiai plays a pivotal role in guiding communities toward rejecting radical ideologies while embracing shared values of humanity and peace. By aligning their teachings with contemporary challenges, they build resilient, harmonious communities where differences are celebrated rather than contested. In summary,

theories of religious moderation offer a comprehensive lens for understanding how kiai in Pamulang strengthen tolerance and pluralism. By integrating Quranic principles, intellectual reasoning, and contextual practices, they demonstrate that moderation is not merely a theoretical ideal but a pragmatic tool for fostering harmony in diverse societies.

### 3.2. Reviving Moderate Islam in Pamulang: Challenges and Implementation Strategies

The revival of moderate Islamic teachings among the diverse Pamulang community is a crucial task. This implementation is not straightforward; it requires a suitable, effective, and efficient approach to prevent the emergence of turmoil, commotion, friction, extremism, radicalism, and terrorism. In this context, the role of Kiai, as Islamic boarding school elites and religious figures with diverse but competent religious educational backgrounds, is of significant importance. They are responsible for integrating moderate Islamic values from the Qur'an, such as deliberation, tolerance, equality, justice, honesty, mutual help, and obedience, into the Islamic boarding school curriculum, both formally and informally.

Furthermore, Kiai is also expected to convey these teachings in various religious and non-religious activities. This includes, but is not limited to, their role as preachers in mosques, resource persons in recitations at the tackle assembly, Sunday morning recitations, lecturers at *walimat al-'arsy*, *walimat as-safar* events, and commemorators of Islamic and national holidays. However, it's important to remember that online and offline dialogue with community figures and the media in Pamulang is not just an option but a crucial channel for spreading this message.

Considering the vast area of Pamulang, the material delivery method cannot be done conventionally. A variety of approaches are needed that adhere to the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith and refer to the method of preaching the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which is confirmed in Surah Al-Nahl (16:125), namely wisely, good teaching, and arguing in a way the good one. Kiai can also complete the delivery of their teachings using oral (lectures), written (*qalam*), and actions (things/deeds). This approach was not only exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. However, it was also carried out by Islamic broadcasting scholars in the early and middle periods of Islam in Indonesia, known as Wali or Kiai in Java, Nun in Madura, Buya or Datuk in West Sumatra, Teungku in Aceh, and Gurutta in South Sulawesi.

In the modern and contemporary era, these methods remain relevant to be applied by Islamic boarding school Kiai, with the addition of story, history, analogy, seminar, question and answer, and demonstration methods, using various media such as television, video, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, letters, news, magazines and other social media. As a role model apostle, the Prophet Muhammad SAW has conveyed the teachings of moderate Islam both secretly and openly. While in Medina, he founded an Islamic state and formed a civil society with an approach that was not coercive, fair, and wise and did not take sides.

The primary basis still refers to the Al-Qur'an, a miracle and a life guide that must be practiced daily. Therefore, the teaching must be fair, balanced, and not biased to one side. This reflects the principle that humans have an equal position, where everyone sits equally low and stands equally high, and applies the values of tolerance and mutual assistance in belief, as stated in His words, "To you is your religion, to me is my religion."



Referring to the teachings of Rasulullah SAW, the Islamic boarding school Kiai and Ulama in Pamulang agreed to strengthen the understanding of moderate Islam. In the educational context, this understanding is the initial domain related to all mental activities, which include perception, thinking, memory, and information processing. Understanding is carried out simultaneously through four instruments: materials, methods, media, and facilities and infrastructure. In this context, Kiai and ulama at the MUI Pamulang District emphasized that understanding the teachings of moderate Islam is carried out with the themes "Islam Religion *Rahmatan lil- 'ālamīn*," "Living Neighborly in Islam," and "Rights and Obligations of Community Citizens." The delivery method can be lectures during Friday sermons, discussions, and questions and answers when serving as resource persons at sub-district offices, prayer rooms, mosques, and *ta'lim* assemblies.

One cleric added that the teachings of *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*, both in terms of text and context, need to be conveyed, considering the diversity of the Muslim community in Pamulang. Delivery can be done through lectures, questions and answers, and discussions, with facilities including mosques, *ta'lim* councils, Islamic boarding schools, Religious Communication Forums (FKUB), Health Services, TNI/Polri, and the Indonesian Mosque Council of South Tangerang City. The media can include books by Salaf scholars, the Qur'an, hadith, and other sources.

Other scholars emphasized that *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* teachings, including Shafi'i fiqh, Ash'ari monotheism, and al-Ghazali's Sufism, can be conveyed using lecture, discussion, and question-and-answer methods. Facilities and infrastructure such as mosques, prayer rooms, assemblies, and Islamic boarding schools also promise community participation, even though the congregation consists of various ages. According to him, the issue of *khilāfīyah* and *furū'īyah* is not an internal problem within Pamulang Muslims. They can live in harmony thanks to the role of Kiai, ulama, and umara, who continue to provide understanding at various *mudhākirah* and recitation assemblies.

For them, what needs to be strengthened is their faith. If the faith is solid, other aspects will follow. On the other hand, if one's faith is exposed to wrong understanding, it will be challenging to correct it. After strengthening the faith, understanding worship and morals needs to be continued. If these two aspects are good, moderate thinking and behavior will emerge. Therefore, Kiai, Ulama, and *Asātidh* must convey moderate Islamic teachings so that society becomes more open, flexible, and able to live with followers of other religions. In the context of *mu'āmalāt*, there is no problem, but in worship, the principle remains " *Lakum Dīnukum Waliyadīn*." The point is not to force other people to convert to Islam, especially in dishonest ways.

### 3.3. Religious Moderation: Approach and Implementation in South Tangerang

Ulama in South Tangerang often quote the Qur'an, hadith, and Shafi'i fiqh when discussing *furū'īyah* and khilafat issues, such as Italian, tarawih prayers, qunut, and call to prayer. Delivery of material is carried out through various methods, including lectures, questions, and answers, and discussions, as well as the media of tafsir, hadith, and fiqh books in houses of worship and residents' homes during the *al- 'arsī* and *as-safar walīmah*, as well as in the sub-district hall and Tangerang City Hall South. As a speaker at Muspida and indoor and

outdoor seminars, he emphasized that mosques, *ta'lim* assemblies, residents' homes, and even banners, banners, and billboards were the most effective facilities and infrastructure.

Understanding of religious moderation must be conveyed to all levels of society using material from verses from the Qur'an and hadith combined with local community wisdom. The method refers to Surah al-Nahl/16: 125, "Call (humans) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good advice, and argue with them better." According to him, the most effective thing is combining the three lecture methods with examples or actual actions in religion, such as giving charity. However, da'wah is most effective through actions, wealth, and political power.

Apart from material delivered directly to the congregation, seminars were held on campuses, which various mass organizations, such as Persis, NU, Muhammadiyah, and MUI, attended. This activity also took place at the Banjar Islamic Da'wah Building, inviting all figures with different views. Quoting Surah Al-Hujurat, the Prophet Muhammad's people are like a big house with many rooms; every room must be guarded. In the context of faith, there are various sects, such as Mu'tazilah, Shi'a, Jabariyah, Qadariyah, Murji'ah, and Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah, which are only rooms in the big house of Islam. With good care, religious moderation can be enforced.

Therefore, understanding religious moderation must start with education, guidance, and da'wah through action, following the primary duties and functions of each ulama and kiai. The public needs to be given guidance regarding consumer behavior with a persuasive approach. Apart from that, it is essential to maintain relations between umara and ulama through friendship. Third, good morals are needed, and avoid thinking that Islam is the only true religion, which can narrow the scope of other religions.

After understanding, what needs to be instilled is attitude. Attitude is a person's response to social objects, which include symbols, words, slogans, and ideas. Attitudes can be positive (accepting) or negative (not accepting) depending on the understanding, observation, and consideration that the individual has experienced regarding the object. In Pamulang society, radicalism and extremism are rejected. An attitude of religious moderation is demonstrated by community activities represented by religious leaders in the South Tangerang MUI, who held several seminars to strengthen moderate religious attitudes. For example, when Israel launched acts of violence against Palestinians, the community, together with the South Tangerang City Government, held a solidarity action for Palestine. It condemned the extreme actions taken by the Israeli government.

For ulama and kiai, the attitude of religious moderation consists of several principles. Firstly, there is no need to be disappointed with everyone, because there are things like and hate about new items. Some people may think the truth is according to what they know, such as that women must wear a white mukena for prayers or a sarong and peci for men. When they saw people praying wearing jackets, they felt shocked. Therefore, it is essential to explain the nature and law of things slowly so that people can understand for themselves. Second, be patient, creative, and able to forgive others. Third, it can localize differences while creating common ground to create beauty in differences.

We cannot be united only by the Qur'an because not everyone believes in it, and the Bible cannot unite us for the same reason. What can unite us is Pancasila as a transactional tool. Therefore, group ego needs to be sacrificed for the sake of togetherness. This is the Medina Charter model, which is this country's foundation. It was initiated by the Prophet and ulama in



Indonesia, with Pancasila as a tool for diverse transactions. In Indonesia, Islamic law is firmly established, reflecting the form of Islam in a diverse society. It is better if religious jargon is not displayed amidst diversity because the Qur'an has prepared beautiful language, as in "*Yā ayyuhā alladhīna āmanū ittaqū Allāh*," meaning "O you who believe, fear Allah," while "*Yā ayyuhā an-nās ittaqū rabbakum*" invites all people of various religions to fear their God (without mentioning Allah).

There are many radical groups in South Tangerang because this area is a meeting point for several regions, making it easy to transit and a gathering place for various cultures and academics. Therefore, the existing formulation of religious moderation needs to be improved by establishing good relations between umara, ulama, and the South Tangerang Forkopimda. To strengthen the attitude of religious moderation, all relevant elements must be involved: government, religious leaders, community leaders, TNI, Police, and campuses. They must have the same attitude in providing correct information and understanding what is wrong. Therefore, social media, such as YouTube and WhatsApp, can be used to provide understanding to the public; in addition to all related elements, they must also provide examples. All elements must work together because no religion teaches violence. Islam teaches caring, helping each other, avoiding division, and strengthening unity. Even though there are differences in beliefs, we are still one in the unity of diversity.

Therefore, the teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah, which are based on the Qur'an and Hadith, must always be given continuously. Understanding religious moderation behavior through education also needs to be implemented. In this context, the psychomotor domain needs to be implemented. This means that when teachers teach science, they must also have a target so students have psychomotor abilities. Psychomotor skills relate to skills or the ability to act after a person receives specific learning experiences. For example, a person's behavior, society, and people must be strengthened by Islamic boarding school kiai, ulama, religious elites, and community leaders to behave moderately still, tolerantly, and prioritize unity, not conflict and disputes.

In the nineties, commotion often occurred in several mosques when the issue of khilafiyah was discussed. However, nowadays, the noise has reduced and disappeared. Society realizes that the goal of a Muslim's life is to seek Allah's approval, and one way is through religion. In fiqh, four schools of thought explain the relationship between humans and Allah, humans and humans, and other creatures. If religion is a means, then the teachings of the four schools of thought are also a means so that a person can choose one of the means that is right for him. They realize that these teachings are the result of human thought, which is relative; it can be correct, and it can also be wrong, while the absolute truth is the Qur'an. If the issue of khilafiyah is not discussed internally and between religious communities, then there will be no commotion, so what can be seen is tolerance and harmony between religious communities in neighborhood, community, and state life.

### 3.4. Revitalization of Moderate Islamic Teachings for Religious Moderation in the Pamulang Community

Differences, no matter how small, are unavoidable in people's lives. However, Islam views these differences as a blessing that needs to be maintained. One way to do this is to strengthen the people's religious behavior by understanding the teachings of moderation contained in the Koran and hadith. This understanding must also be strengthened by introducing the behavior of the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, and the *awliyā* and ulama.

First, Islam, as a religion that teaches moderation, exists amidst opposing poles. Moderation is a solution to existing contradictions. For example, in the context of faith, there are differences in views between Jews and Christians regarding Jesus. Jews consider Jesus to be the child of adultery, while Christians believe that Jesus is the son of God. Islam answers this difference by emphasizing that the creation of Jesus was similar to the creation of Adam, namely from the soil with the word '*kun fayakūn.*' Thus, there is no reason to accuse Jesus of being a child of adultery because God Almighty created everything. Apart from that, the Christian view of Jesus as the son of God is also unfounded, considering that the creation of humans did not require a male figure. Thus, it can be concluded that Jesus was neither the son of God nor the son of adultery; he is a holy figure born through the words of God.

Second, in worship, the principle of moderation is also applied. For example, there are teachings not to pray with a voice that is too loud or too quiet; instead, it is best done in moderation. The same applies to giving infaq, where people are taught not to be stingy or excessive but to find a middle ground between the two. Other people often underestimated the Prophet as a figure of moderation because of his moderate attitude. In a hadith, it is said that three people came to the Prophet's wife to compare their deeds of worship with the Prophet. They considered the Prophet's activities, such as sleeping and getting married, trivial. However, Rasulullah explained that he was the person who was best able to maintain his relationship with Allah, even though he sometimes fasted, slept, and married. He emphasized that anyone who does not accept his way of life does not belong to his people. This shows that someone cannot claim to be a follower of the Prophet if he adheres to extreme beliefs.

Third, in an internal context, the Prophet often faced differences of opinion among his friends. In situations involving prisoners of war, for example, the Prophet did not berate those who held different opinions but sought a point of moderation. When Abu Bakr proposed freeing the captives for ransom, Umar bin Khattab proposed execution, while Abdullah bin Rawahah proposed burning. The Prophet responded to all opinions with praise and referred to the examples of previous prophets so that every friend felt appreciated. This approach creates an atmosphere of peace and harmony, showing that moderation can be used as a principle in religion.

The people of Pamulang, who generally adhere to the Shafi'i madhhab, need to continue to study this madhhab so that people can worship and do good deeds according to the guidance. Ulama, who has different views, must make friends and find solutions so that togetherness remains. In this context, the government needs to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet by listening to the problems of its citizens without taking sides with any one group. The task of ulama is to remind people to be diligent in worship and to have the courage to guide extreme groups in overcoming narrow thinking.

Pro-moderation needs to be encouraged by all parties, both from civil society and the authorities. Both must be willing to invest time, energy, thought, and resources to create content that offers a moderate viewpoint. Online media, such as YouTube, can be critical in accelerating public understanding of religious moderation. Thus, da'wah methods need to be expanded, including da'wah *bi al-lisān*, *bi al-hāḥ*, *bi al-māl*, and da'wah through social media.

The globalization of information has reduced friction in behavior, allowing people to access various studies through digital platforms. This development should be utilized to increase understanding of religious moderation. Besides that, religious social institutions must focus more on muamalah matters, such as zakat and social assistance, rather than exacerbating differences.

To revitalize moderate Islamic teachings for religious moderation, a deep understanding of the principles of Fiqh al-Maqashid, Fiqh al-Awlawiyat, Fiqh al-Muwazanat, and Fiqh al-Ma'alat is needed. One crucial step is to understand the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah by paying attention to the maqashid asy-syari'ah, namely the primary goal of the shari'a in realizing benefit. In addition, cooperation between various groups of Muslims must be strengthened in agreed aspects, accompanied by tolerance for differences that arise.

This effort also requires integrating science and faith and combining material creativity and spiritual nobility. Humanitarian principles such as justice and respect for human rights must be the primary basis. In addition, updating thought through appropriate ijthad needs to continue so Islamic teachings remain relevant to current developments. To strengthen the unity of the Ummah, ulama and religious leaders need to display ease in fatwas and convey da'wah messages full of optimism and hope.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Islamic boarding school caretakers (kiai) and ulama in Pamulang play a pivotal and strategic role as charismatic leaders in promoting religious moderation within a pluralistic urban society. Their influence extends beyond religious teachings to include mediation in social and political matters, helping to maintain harmony, tranquility, and peace within the community. Through their da'wah (preaching), kiai and ulama demonstrate their effective ability to address religious issues and engage with broader social and political concerns, reinforcing the importance of moderation in all aspects of life.

These religious leaders are highly qualified, with many graduating from prestigious national and international institutions. This educational background empowers them to establish and maintain Islamic boarding schools and to deliver sermons (tausiah) focused on religious moderation. Their approach incorporates a variety of methods and mediums, using religious texts, such as the Qur'an and Hadith, along with Islamic disciplines like monotheism (aqeedah), fiqh (jurisprudence), Sufism, and Islamic history. The teachings center on religious moderation, emphasizing the relationship between humans and God and the interactions among humans and other creatures.

In addition to promoting religious moderation, the kiai and ulama contribute significantly to societal accommodation of local culture, encouraging peaceful coexistence, non-violence, and mutual respect across religious communities. Their teachings align with the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, as outlined in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution,

underscoring their pivotal role in fostering national unity. Through their leadership, they create spaces for resolving conflicts and promoting tolerance among diverse groups, significantly contributing to social harmony and the broader goal of national unity.

In conclusion, the role of kiai and ulama in Pamulang as charismatic leaders is vital in nurturing religious moderation in a multicultural society. Their qualifications, unwavering commitment to peace, and ability to address social and religious issues are essential in fostering religious tolerance and societal unity. However, further exploration is needed to assess the specific impacts of their leadership in the context of changing social dynamics, particularly in response to the challenges posed by globalization and digital media. Additionally, future research could address the concrete outcomes of their interventions on community attitudes and behaviors.

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